

BACKING OF THE PEACE PROCESS BY THE POLITICAL FORCES, COMMUNICATION NO. 21

Villa Nueva Colombia, 3 August 2000

At the invitation of the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation, and in compliance with the Agreement of Caquetania, dated 28 April 1999, Camilo Gómez Álzate, the High Commissioner for Peace, Horacio Serpa, of the Liberal Party, Noemí Sanín, of the Sí Colombia movement, Omar Yepes, of the Conservative Party, Jaime Caicedo, of the Communist Party, the presidents of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Mario Uribe and Basilio Villamizar, respectively, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército Popular*, FARC–EP), Alfonso Cano, of the Bolivarian Movement, and Iván Márquez, of the secretariat of FARC–EP have met with the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation today, 3 August 2000, in Villa Nueva Colombia, the main venue for dialogue and negotiation, in Los Pozos, the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán.

After analysing the current situation and the development of the peace process, they issue the following communication.

RECITALS

- We agree that the negotiated political solution is the correct path for the reconciliation of the Colombian people and for resolving the conflict from which the country has suffered for over three decades.
- Progress has been made in the stages that have taken place in the current dialogue and negotiation process, such as the consolidation of trust between the parties, the definition of an agenda, the involvement of the international community, which has given its full backing to the process, the agreements on the methodology for the negotiations and the strengthening of public participation in the process through public audiences.
- Proposals were exchanged to initiate talks on the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

- Persevering and trying to overcome all obstacles and difficulties that arise along the way is decisive in any process of this nature.
- In compliance with the political agreement dated 28 April 1999, signed in Caquetania, the support group for the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation was created to keep the political forces informed of the peace process.

PUBLIC DECLARATION

1. The support group for the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation began its work today and in the course of a number of hours saw a broad exchange of ideas regarding the progress of and difficulties in the peace process. The exchange took place in a frank atmosphere and the various issues of the process and the current situation were discussed.
2. The commitment to and support for the state policy for peace with social justice, promoted by the government and based on the political solution to the conflict, was ratified and we reiterated our support for the state policy in the direct fight against paramilitarism.
3. New meetings of the support group and the Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation will take place periodically in the future to continue strengthening the peace process and consolidate the exchange of opinions and information on developments, progress, events and difficulties in the process, in addition to addressing relevant issues. Similarly, the importance of inviting sectors other than those who signed the Caquetania political agreement to participate in the mechanisms created by the roundtable was emphasised.
4. We agree that, in light of the social and economic situation facing the country, the importance of reaching specific agreements regarding the issues being studied by the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation, such as economic growth and employment, the analysis of proposals regarding the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and the generation of peace results, which are desired by Colombians.

5. The leaders of the country's various political forces also stressed that it is extremely important to make progress with commitments and agreements that allow respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.
6. The backing for the different participation mechanisms created by the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation to promote the participation of all Colombians in the peace process is ratified, such as the support group for the public audiences, email and freepost, leaflets and teleconferences. Similarly, Colombians are called on to use these mechanisms to actively participate in building peace with social justice.
7. The support for the agreements signed by the National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation on the various issues in the search for solutions to the conflict was ratified.
8. The National Roundtable for Dialogue and Negotiation received the concerns expressed by the representatives of the various political forces and will begin to study them.
9. We agree that, in spite of the difficulties and problems, with a patriotic and enthusiastic attitude, we will be able to build a future based on the hope of a Colombia with peace and social justice.